

Eng. Poetry vol 20.

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LETTER

T O

Mr. *P R I O R*,

Discovering a

S E C R E T

O F

Vast Importance.

By a Fellow Sufferer.

*Iniquitates nostræ & peccata nostra super nos sunt, & in ipsis nos
tabescimus : quomodo ergo vivere poterimus ? Ezek. 33.*

*Immedicabile vulnus
Ense recidendum est, ne pars sincera trahatur. Ovid Metam.*



L O N D O N :

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10. Sept.

LETTER

Mr. P. R. I. O. R.

Discovering a

SECRET

Not important.

By a Fellow Student.

tabellam: quomodo deinde vivere poterimus? Lick. 33.

Ovid Metam.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



THE PREFACE.

FOR a considerable Time past it has been my Misfortune to be lock'd up from the Conversation both of Men and Books. But, unless my Memory misinforms me, it is a Custom frequently allowed of, by our Herd of Pamphleteers, to put a Prefatory Gloss upon our Performances, and for the most part be our selves the only Trumpeters of our Commendation: Wherefore, not to deviate from this beaten Road, I am resolv'd to say something in my own Behalf. First then, I have endeavour'd to be very short, though, perhaps, not very pithy; and I don't doubt but the Reader will easily conclude with me, That Brevity is my chief Excellence. But if it should be alledg'd, that I have come far short of my Pattern, I verily assure my Reader, that the Height of my Ambition was but to follow after, *Longo sed proximus*

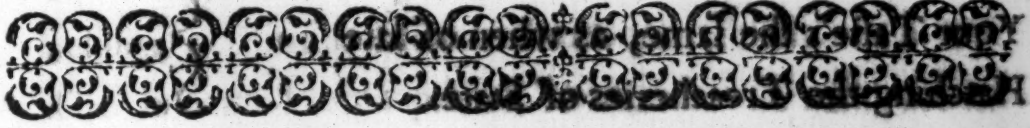
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mus Intervallo : And I must beg of him to consider, that, tho' Mr. Prior is now in Salvâ Custodia, yet he was not so when he wrote to Fleetwood Shephard Esq; and then it will be natural for any one to observe from whence this is dated, which, I hope, will in a great Measure apologize for its Imperfections ; for when a Man's Body is imprison'd, his Mind is then no less confin'd, the Wings of Fancy flag, and Thoughts, tho' ne'er so bright in Embryo, are oftentimes lost in Melancholy's Shade ; the Soul being too much oppress'd with Care to give 'em Birth.

But what shall I say for this Discovery, this Secret of vast Importance ? Methinks, the least I can do is to assume an Air of Modesty (stupendous in a Pamphleteer !) then blush, and ask the expecting Reader's Pardon ; which I hope will not be difficult to obtain, since He is not the first Man, by Ten thousand, that has been imposed upon by a specious Title-Page. : But, as an Excuse for the Deceit, I have ventur'd, under a second Title, to amuse him as agreeably as I am able : And since I generously acknowledge that I am a Prisoner, and consequently a poor Poet, and that I have not the least Inlet into Friend Matt's Political SECRECIES, who would not rather smile, than be disgusted, when he finds himself thus whimsically deluded ?

From the King's Bench
Prison, Aug. 24, 1715.

Whether, just at the Brink of Fate,



Be that as 'twill, I'm bent to lend
What, in good Faith, I can't commend.

EPISTLE

However, to divert your Happ
From this dull Theme I'll make a Slip

Matthew Prior.
And try if I can't make a Verse
Of much such little-rattle Matter,

In Imitation of His to

FLEETWOOD SHEPHERD

Had not there been a Foot to spare:

WHEN angry Death glares in your Face,
Accompanied with just Disgrace,
As well as your Conscience hourly sting
For quick Repentance from your Sin;

At such a Crisis one may question

Even a Rebel's good Digestion;

I must confess th' Attempt is bold,
Whether
For as I oftimes have been told

Whether, just at the Brink of Fate,
~~You take the same, as when of late~~
~~Marching the Treacheries of State.~~

Be that as 'twill, I'm bent to send
 What, in good Faith, I can't commend ;
 For, since I imitate a *Traitor*,
 Too sure 'twill favour of Ill-Nature.

However, to divert your Hypp, :
 From this dull Theme I'll make a Slip,
 And try if I can't forge a Letter
 Of much such tittle-tattle Matter,
 As you once sent to *Fleetwood Shephard*
 Long Time before you was in Jeopard-
 Y— should have there brought up the Rear,
 Had not there been a Foot to spare :
 But that 'mongst Friends may be forgotten,
 As well as You, *when hang'd and rotten !*

So now, Friend Matt, here comes my Story,
 As long as that of *Old John Dory* ;
 I must confess th' Attempt is bold,
 For as I oftimes have been told,

Thou

Thou art Old Dog at writing Letters,
 Especially, when to your Betters ;
 Besides, at Rhime Thou art no Booby,
 Tho' in State-Plots a perfect Looby.
 Howe'er, I'll scrawl whilst Whimsy's hot,
 For whether Thou approv'st or not,
 I faith, it matters not a Jot.

As, when you see a Poppet-Show,
 The Machines seem to speak below,
 Tho' all the Time some Power above,
 Directs 'em how to speak and move :
 So fares it with a jingling Poet,
 Who thinks He's Art, and needs must show it ;
 One of the *Nine*, tho' His they seem,
 The Jargon makes and sets the Theme ;
 If ought ingenious He writes,
 'Tis she inspires, 'tis she indites.
 Now tho' I've quoted just before
 A Simile, pray take one more ;
 For when my Pate's once set upon't,
 It must come out whate'er comes on't.

As, generally when Men eat,
 With Grace they consecrate their Meat;
 Then with good Consciences fall on
 Their Dinner, be it Beef or Mutton;
 So I, laying aside all Joke,
 The God *Apollo's* Aid invoke,
 Harmonious to tune my Lyre,
 And warm me with Poetick Fire;
 Praying my Verse in Size and Shape,
 May yours resemble, whom I ape;
 That, since to you they're to be shown,
 You may perhaps think some your own:
 As your *Mistaken Venus* thought
 In *Cloe's* Picture (finely wrought)
 That she her Goddess-self did spy,
 Her rosie Cheek, her brilliant Eye,
 Her panting Breast, her milk-white Thigh,
 And cry'd, Son *Cupid*, *There am I!*
 Dear *Matt*, of *Genius Divine*,
 Whose Poems prove in ev'ry Line
 A flowing Fancy, boundless Wit,
 That grac'd each Distick when you writ,

Forgive

Forgive my faint, ambitious Muse;
 Her bold, aspiring Thoughts excuse:
 Recanting what She said before,
 Her vain Attempts She'll now deplore,
 Lest, whilst too lofty Strains she tries,
 Her Wings grow weak, she flags, and dies.
 As the vain-glorious *Phaethon*,
 Aiming to charioteer the Sun,
 Was headlong thrown by angry Heaven,
 To others Pride a Judgment given.
 In short, I yield in Poetry
 Thou dost as far out-balance Me,
 As I do Thee in Honesty.
 Oh! had it been *Apollo's* Pleasure,
 That I had shar'd thy happy Treasure
 Of Learning and improved Parts,
 With universal Skill in Arts;
 This Letter then should have been writ
 In beauteous Style, in Numbers fit,
 With better Judgment, better Wit:
 But since his Godship that denies,
Let what hereafter comes suffice;

And

And kindly take, what kindly meant is;
Good's the Design, whate'er th'Event is.

Now, Sir, if *Vestis Virum facit*,
I'll prove I may be dubb'd a Poet:
My Breeches, they're torn all to Rags;
Nor have I Sixpence in my Bags:
Then tell me, if to humane Sight
I don't appear a perfect Wit:
Besides, a Judge should make Allowance
For Time, for Place, and for Convenience;
Though some will readily reply,
Venter Largitor Ingeni:

But how can You apply that to One,
Already din'd on Beans and Bacon,
And writes for nought but meer Diversion.
Vary the Phrase, and make the Thesis,
Ingenium Largitor Ventris:

Then judge, if my ingenious Brain
Would Corpse with Bread and Cheese sustain:
No, Sir; I'd then drink nappy Liquor,
And booze like any Neighb'ring Vicar;

Till

Till emptying capacious Rumpkin,
 I fall on Bones of *Norfolk* Dumpling,
 Happy, as any Country Bumpkin:
 Which way so'er the Words are stated,
 What are they to what's now debated?
 Blest Liberty the Pen inspires,
 Which with Applause the Reader fires:
 But when bleak Lettices of Iron
 The meagre Poet do environ,
 The fittest Theme's the *Groans of Zion!*
 Don't *Ovid's Tristia* verifie,
 An exil'd Muse ne'er soars so high,
 As when she rov'd at Liberty?
 He to strange Lands was forc'd away,
 From Country and from Friends to stray:
 If I have not their Company,
 What are my Friends then more to Me,
 Than if I dwelt beyond the Sea?
 And pray than Him how am I better,
 Now I'm inditing this my Letter?
 By Metaphor the Billows bear,
 And adverse Winds in Combat meet;

Look to the Sky, or down below,
 Each is a dismal, dreadful Foe.
 Of native Land a Part how small
 Does now me (wretched Man!) enthrall?
 Which I've so often travell'd o'er,
 It seems like any Common Whore;
 Irksome and dull I stalk along,
 Nor hear the Blackbird's tuneful Song,
 Nor Cloe's more engaging Tongue;
 Pale Sorrow sits on ev'ry Face;
 Our only Comfort is *through Grace*
 From *Parliament* to hope Release.
 'As heretofore, Oh! was I now
 Stranger to what contracted Brow
 Of jilting Fortune e'er did mean,
 Verse should flow soft, on softer Theme;
 Or knew I how past Slips t'appease,
 And once again see all Things please;
 That I (grant it ye Heavenly Powers!)
 May pass away my vacant Hours
 In verdant Groves and shady Bowers;

Where

Where are no sad, no doleful Strains,
 But what the Nightingal complains;
 Zephyrs and gentle Gales surrounding,
 With Nature's Smiles all Things abounding:
 So let the faithless Atheist know,
 There are two Worlds, e'en here below!
 Like One recover'd Health again
 From racking Stone or goutish Pain,
 (Believe me, being in this Place
 Is full as bad as either Case)
 Busy in Ease I'll ransack o'er
 Old Greek and Roman Learning's Store,
 That I next time may to my Friend
 My self in better Verse commend:
 Their brightest Notions I'll purloin,
 That You may sometimes taste a Line,
 To which You'll find the Foil in mine;
 Then rest contented with this View
 Of what's hereafter to ensue;
 And, here, I thought to have plac'd, Adieu!
 But hold; in Muse it would be rude,
 As yet, methinks, for to conclude,

Before She kindly recommends
 To You an Halter, and your Friends
 A Scaffold for their timely Ends!
 Scarce your own Muse your Crimes could dress;
 Wherefore mine humbly does confess,
 She'll ne'er pretend such *Guilt* to paint
 With half so deep, so damn'd a Taint,
 As if She did delineate
 With *that curst Blood*, which meant the State
 The most Papistick Lapse of Fate.
 So, Matt, farewell; a speedy Voyage;
 The *De'il*, no doubt, will find You Stowage
 And *Charon*, since your *Hellish* Carriage,
 Wo'nt ask one Farthing for his Ferryage.

F I N I S.